

Love and Light

SSSSO (UK) - monthly update



9th January 2006

The Future is Bright...

Dear Friends, Sai Ram and a Happy New Year!

The New Year usually brings a time when everyone is encouraged by the media, friends and family to do a 'self-audit' on changing their physical being. Everyone is encouraged to cut back on eating, drinking, sleeping and perhaps take up a little bit of exercise to feel great. But do we see an advert in the newspaper or on TV from God asking us to do an audit on one's Self? By looking at our spiritual being and avoiding indulging in vices such as anger, hatred and envy would help towards making the individual feel good. This can be done through the good company you keep, by going to your Centre/Group regularly - without using the weighing scales! As I look ahead to the wonderful activities planned by our Sacred Organisation for 2006, such as the National Youth Pilgrimage, the annual Retreat and regular Satsangs, I feel happy to know that the future is bright, the future is Orange...

Love and Light

Shobhna Patel, UK Chair

NOBC 2006

'80 Years of Love in Action'

Our annual National Office Bearers' Conference will be held on Saturday February 4th 2006 in Stanmore, Middlesex. Now that bookings have been received from so many office bearers it is possible to extend the invitation to 'active workers'. It would be good to see as many as possible from Regions 4,5,6,7,8. The Conference is a wonderful opportunity to all get together and review our Organisation's past year and reflect on our way forward in the coming year. It is a chance, too, to meet old friends from around the country and learn of the exciting and varied things that happen throughout the 113 Centres and Groups that we have. The entire UK Council looks forward to meeting delegates and the NOBC Planning Group is endeavouring to create as relaxed and productive a day as possible. Please contact Centre/Group Chairperson ASAP for application form.

UK Central Council

Region 2 - New Year Honour

The Harrow Times carried two articles in the last fortnight featuring Ranu Mehta-Radia, Head of the Sai School of Harrow. She was chosen to be 'Borough VIP' and representative at London's New Year's Day Parade. As part of this honour she spent New Year's Eve at a top West End hotel, rode in the VIP open-topped bus, sat

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in the VIP grandstand, attended a post-parade tea at Whitehall Place and was presented with a silver salver by the Mayor of Harrow, Cllr. Paddy Lyne. The articles highlighted the good aims of the Harrow Sai School and mentioned its 'Queen's Award for Voluntary Services' received earlier in 2005.

Mukesh Mamtora, Region 2 Chair

Region 3 - SSE

On Saturday 10th December 2005, the students of the Region 3 SSE School visited two local places of worship. This was an optional extra curricular activity that helped to enrich children's understanding of aspects of the SSE curriculum. The two places of worship visited were the London Sri Murugan Temple (Hindu) and the Dashmesh Darbar Gurdwara, (Sikh). 44 children and 30 adults (parents and teachers) took part in the visit. The trip went very well and the children, parents and teachers had a very informative time, asking questions and learning about religious aspects and the significance of practices undertaken in each temple. The children were a credit to Swami and the school. Love and hospitality were evident at both temples.

Region 3 SSE School Coordinators

Region 4 - Spiritual Conference

A Regional spiritual conference, 'Walking with SAI', was held in Rugby on 10th December. Kiran Patel, National Spiritual Coordinator, set the scene during his opening remarks. Partish Dubey shared his experiences on the theme, recalling his time as a student at the Sri Sathya Sai institute of Higher Learning. This was followed by an account of 'divine occurrences' by a homegrown Region 4 youth, Paresch Prajapathi, who has been involved in organising and participating in numerous pilgrimages to Prashanti Nilayam. The conference also included two panel discussions on 'The Power of Prayer' and 'Self Confidence'. The first concluded that there is 'Power' in 'Prayer' but it is our faith and a wavering mind that become obstacles in our prayers. From the second panel discussion on 'Self Confidence' it emerged that self-confidence is essential for progress in spirituality and that one should take on any good work with confidence especially if it is through divine instructions. After all, when Noah was asked to build the Ark by the Lord, he did not lament and complain but undertook the task with confidence. The Regional Chair brought the conference to a close with his remarks on the excellent and unique content of the conference and also acknowledging the contribution by

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the Youth of the Region in this conference. The Region has Youth members Amit Despande and Yashmin Mistry as the Regional Spiritual and Regional Service Coordinators. Feedback from the attendees: "Very thought-provoking".

Mukund Patel, Region 5 Chair

Region 5 – Christmas Hampers

Hampers were distributed at Christmas time in R5. For example: gifts were taken to the Sisters of Charity Homeless Shelter where monthly service is carried out in Liverpool (56 hampers including hats, gloves, socks, chocolates, and mince pies). 18 hampers were collected and distributed via Social Services in the Rochdale area to the known needy families in that area.

Sanjay Vaja, Region 5 Chair

Region 6 – Helping Women

At the R6 combined Ladies' Day and 80th Birthday Celebration, attended by 115 devotees a collection point was set up to gather assorted toiletries for donation to a women's refuge. These secret residential homes are created to give support and shelter to women who have to escape from violent domestic situations. They mostly leave home with nothing for themselves or their children. The Region generously gave sacks and sacks of varied, helpful items. Just before Christmas I delivered these, by arrangement, to The Women's Refuge, Hove and South Downs Area, Brighton. This refuge is partially funded by the Brighton and Hove Council. Our Region had been advised not to make up individual packs as we had first thought might be helpful. Rather, we were encouraged to simply donate items that go into communal store cupboards in the Refuge houses, where women take what they need. This saves on any wastage. The Director of the establishment I was sent to was very appreciative and a cleaner kindly paused and photographed the handover for our Regional Archive! R6 also initiated a Birthday project to donate 80 good quality, introductory, Sai Baba books to local prisons, rehabilitation centres and other similar establishments.

Philippa Malcomson, Region 6 Chair

Region 7 – Interfaith

Region 7 held an interfaith meeting on the theme "Striving for Unity" at the Religious and Cultural Resource Centre in Plymouth on 10th December 2005. The main guests for the afternoon were from the PIETY (Plymouth Islamic Educational Trust) Islamic group in Plymouth. Approximately 70 people participated in the meeting. The programme commenced with songs followed by an interactive ice-breaking quiz in which quotations from religious sources were displayed without divulging the source. Teams had to identify the religion and source of the quotes. The unity of faiths became apparent through the diversity of answers that

the teams offered, typically ranging over many religions. This was followed by a brief introduction to the SSSSO and a showing of the video "His Work". There then followed an introduction to Islam from a member of PIETY followed by 2 moving talks from a Christian and a Hindu member of the Sai Organisation and one from a member of PIETY on, "How faith helps in daily life".

A main part of the afternoon was a panel discussion on "Ethics and Morality in Daily Life". The panel consisted of 3 members of the SSSSO and 3 members of PIETY.

Many insights on unity flowed from the discussions as we saw panel members responding, reassessing and modifying their views as the dialogues progressed. The unifying nature of Swami's Teachings was apparent and the atmosphere was tangibly charged with His love.

The result was a visible transformation in our guests from their somewhat reserved manner at the beginning of the function to their open questions and loving responses at the end. As the function ended, it was time for our Islamic brothers and sisters to offer their evening prayers. To our surprise, they invited us to join them in their prayers, which we were happy to do. What greater sign could there be of the transforming and unifying power of Swami's message of love?

This is the first of an ongoing series of open meetings, each centred on a meeting with a particular religious group or community.

Jey Sivaloganathan, Region 7 Chair

UK Sathya Sai Schools – Harvest

In Autumn, the pupils of the Sathya Sai School, Leicester, harvested potatoes, tomatoes, organic lettuce, spinach, onions, garlic and herbs from their vegetable gardens – all adding to the learning experience of the pupils and teachers but also to that of the parents, helpers and local people as consumers of this wholesome and value-filled food. The Sathya Sai Schools Committee has divided the responsibility for disseminating its information in the following way: Region 1, 2 and 3: Anita Jethwani, Region 4, 6 and 7: Prabodh Mistry and Region 5 and 8: Ravi Manchanda. A 20-minute PPT presentation on the schools is available. If you wish to have this presentation contact the relevant member above through your Regional Chair.

Ravi Manchanda, Sathya Sai Schools Representative

Diary Dates

UKCC / National Wing Meetings: Quarterly

NOBC 2006: 4th February 2006

Nationwide Regional Satsangs: *Either 25 OR 26 Feb. 2006* (check with your centre/group chair for your Region's chosen date)

BISSE:

5th February, Session 7 and Exams, Leicester
